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"Secularism": A Key to Turkish Politics

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Abstract: In posing Serif Mardin's question of Turkey's center-periphery relations in a revised version, this article considers secularism to be a key to understanding Turkish politics. It views the confrontation between secularists and Islamists in the light of Turkey's center-periphery polarization and identifies the secularist doctrine of Kemalism as a major obstacle to democratic political change. The protection of Turkey's secular order developed into the ideological cornerstone of Kemalist rule, which ranks prime amongst the ideological tools used to justify the political supremacy of the Turkish armed forces. Examining the interrelation between secularism and the almost religious cult around Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the article concludes that the increasing visibility of Islamic symbols and practices in Turkey is a logical consequence of the country's current European Union(EU) reform process, rather than a sign of Turkey's deviation from its political and societal modernization process.

In a seminal article, Serif Mardin suggested that the center-periphery polarization is of great importance in better comprehending Turkish politics and that the Turkish Republic inherited this cleavage between official and popular culture from its Ottoman predecessor.[1] In a similar vein, Nilüfer Göle argued that the "cultural gap between the elites of the center and those at the periphery" stood behind the confrontation between secularists and Islamists in the 1990s.[2] Islamist movements express the aspirations of a new "counter-elite" that attacks the vested interests of Turkey's westernized elite.[3] Ironically,

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this counter-elite draws on the same social resources as their Kemalist predecessors have done–the "cultural capital" that they have acquired via modern education. In this respect, the Islamist counter-elite represents a mirror image of the previous secular republican elite whose cultural preeminence became the main target of Islamist movements.[4]

Nilüfer Göle's analysis confirms Mardin's contention that the cleavage between center and periphery has been perpetuated during the process of Turkish modernization. Moreover, the symbolic confrontation between Islamists and secularists reminds us of the Islamic opposition to secularism during the late years of the Ottoman Empire, in which, according to Mardin, Islam added a unifying dimension to the peripheral code.[5] Yet, under the impact of Turkey's accelerated modernization in the post-Second World War period, the character of center-periphery relations has been subject to essential change. The periphery increasingly has lost its geographical and educational patterns. It has turned into an urban phenomenon with a "counter-elite" that comprises politicians, entrepreneurs, journalists, intellectuals and technicians alike. Thus the Kemalist modernization project has not only perpetuated center-periphery relations, but has also substantially transformed them, making parts of the periphery competitors its own hegemony.[6]

In November 2002, the most recent political embodiment of those Turkish counter-elite, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, came to power replacing the feeble and querulous coalition government of the Kemalist veteran politician Bülent Ecevit. In contrast to Erdogan's previous anti-Western rhetoric, the AKP's election campaign was openly pro-EU, employed the rhetoric benchmarks of Western democracy discourses, and was able to attract votes from a broad societal spectrum. As a ruling party, the AKP introduced reform measures to meet the formal EU standards and, therefore, was able to open EU-accession negotiations with Brussels in October 2005. In short, the Turkish electorate showed political maturity and the new government its willingness to democratic reforms.

Nevertheless, the coming-to-power of the AKP raised concerns among European politicians and media pundits. For many observers, the previous bastion of secularism in the Muslim world seemed to

be endangered. According to Europeans' conventional wisdom, Turkey is the only pure secular state in the Muslim world. Might it be that the AKP, with its roots in Turkey's Islamist political wing, was playing the EU membership-card in order to promote the agenda for the Islamization of the country? Does the increasing visibility of Islamic symbols and practices in Turkey's public sphere not suggest a deviation from the country's secularist modernization process?

In posing Serif Mardin's question in a revised version, this article attempts to provide a response to these European concerns and considers the analysis of Turkish secularism as a key to understanding Turkish politics. In particular, an attempt is made to examine the historical constitution of Turkish secularism as a central legal and ideological institution within Turkey's Kemalist power structure.[7] Contrary to the conventional European reading, Turkish secularism has not been a genuine expression of the separation of religious and political spheres. Rather, the secular principle has served as a means of rigid state control over the religious field. It developed into an ideological core element of the Kemalist state doctrine, subsequently legitimizing the undemocratic roles of the Republican People's Party and later the Turkish Armed Forces. The preservation of secularism became equated with the defense of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's revolution and therefore with the integrity of the republican state as such. Or as a well-known Turkish journalist put it in the year 2000: "In the hands of today's leaders, secularism has become as 'radical' as the purportedly 'fundamentalist' Islam it aims to defeat. Kemalism is now a kind of state religion in its own right."[8]

The secular-Islamist divide has highlighted the asymmetric power relations in Turkish politics. As a source of political legitimacy, secularism has served the Kemalist establishment as a bulwark against political change. However, the increasing visibility and autonomy of religious symbols in Turkey at least partly seems to be a consequence of the EU-induced reform process. In applying the pluralistic norms of the Copenhagen Criteria to Turkish society, in particular, the insistence on personal and associational religious freedoms, the Turkish state necessarily will lose its monopoly over the right of religious expression. Thus, the underlying hypothesis of this article suggests that the Europeanization and democratization of Turkey might indeed be accompanied by a certain form of "re-Islamization."

The argument of the article is developed in four steps. First, some constitutional aspects of the historical development of Turkey's secular order are described, pointing at contradictions between legal principles and societal realities. In focusing on questions of political legitimacy, the second section analyses the political function of the secular principle during the foundational phase of the Turkish Republic. The third section discusses the interrelation between secularism and the almost religious cult around Atatürk. Thereby, the focus is placed on the transformation of the charismatic aspects of Atatürk's rule and the rise of the political autonomy of the Turkish military, which has perceived itself "as the ultimate guarantor of secular democracy."[9] Finally, the article seeks to understand the interrelation between secularism, still-visible limitations of Turkish democracy, and the impact of Turkey's EU accession process in the light of some elements of Foucault's theory of power.

Constitutional Secularization and the Islamization of Society

The concept of secularism, by lumping together too many heterogeneous traditions in one word, has almost lost its analytical qualities.[10] There are at least three different social processes commonly associated with the classical concept of secularism. One, the autonomization of politics in the modern state, i.e., in "Christian terminology" the institutional separation of state and church. Two, the decline of the cultural relevance that religion plays in integrating modern societies. Three, the privatization of religion, reducing religious beliefs to a means of the individual of mastering the contingencies of modern life.[11]

In the linear reading of the secularization/modernization theories of the 1950s and 1960s, these three processes were often understood as inevitable tendencies of modernization eventually leading to the disappearance of religion in modern societies. It was also this linear, simple, and uncritical application of the secularization theory that has informed the scholarly interpretations of the Turkish modernization process.[12] Contemporary developments even in the so-called West have seemingly proven these exaggerated expectations wrong. Even the two prominent protagonists, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, have conceded that the linear equation of modernization with a decline of religion is an error.[13]

This article looks, almost exclusively, at the first process focusing on the relation between religion and the state during Turkey's republican state formation. Thus, secularization is perceived as a specific institutional arrangement of religion and politics, whereas secularism is treated as a political ideology in order to justify the political authority of Turkey's Kemalist state elite. With reference to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (1791), the separation of state and religion has been defined as both the rejection of the establishment of a state religion and the guarantee of free exercise of religion by the citizens.[14]

However, the transformation of these constitutional principles into social practices has shown very different historical trajectories, and the firm establishment of the "twin tolerations" between religion and the state – the "minimal boundaries of freedom of action…for political institutions vis-a-vis religious authorities, and for religious individuals and groups vis-a-vis political institutions" – is a very late achievement of Western state formation.[15] From this perspective, this paper contends that in the political autonomization of the modern Turkish state, constitutional secularism first was a legal instrument to consolidate Kemalist rule and then a disciplinary mechanism to perpetuate it under the leadership of the Turkish Armed Forces.

Turkish constitutionalism has its roots in the Ottoman reform process of the nineteenth century. Initiated by Sultan Mahmut II (1808-1839), the Ottoman reforms were basically aimed at the centralization and modernization of the state apparatus. The major political-administrative trends of the *Tanzimat* (1839-1878) were the abolition of the patrimonial system of tax-farming, the secularization and formalization of education and of the administration of justice, the functional differentiation between branches of government, an increasing division of powers of government, and the introduction of a new system of provincial administration. In the context of these reforms, a constitutional movement emerged that achieved the proclamation of an Ottoman constitution in 1876. Based on the sovereignty of God and its legal order defined by religious law, this first Ottoman constitution was of an essentially theocratic nature. The absolute authority of the sultan was formally grounded in religious legitimacy and the Ottoman parliament was only an advisory body.[16]

The real transition to a secular political order took place with the constitutional enactment of January 1921 by the oppositional National Movement in Ankara. This provisional constitution replaced the principle of divine sovereignty with the sovereignty of the Turkish nation. In April 1924, the Grand National Assembly adopted a new republican constitution that retained the essential elements of the previous enactment. With the introduction of the national principle of sovereignty, these constitutional reforms mark a decisive change in political legitimacy, transforming the patrimonial Muslim Empire into a secular nation-state.[17] However, this move from religious to secular political legitimacy took place only gradually. In particular, during the early period of the national resistance movement (1918-1922), religious elements dominated in defining the identity of the movement as that of Ottoman Muslims.[18] Moreover, adherence to the Sunni branch of Islam was a major criterion for the acquisition of Turkish citizenship during the "secularist" early republican period.[19] In this regard, Islamic symbolism played an essential role in the foundational phase of the Turkish Republic, and consequently Article Two of the first republican constitution retained Islam as the state religion. It was not until April 1928 that the words "The religion of the Turkish state is Islam" were, together with other references to Islam, deleted.[20] In February 1937, secularism as one of the six Kemalist principles eventually assumed constitutional status.[21]

The new constitution of 1961, drafted under the supervision of the National Unity Committee, which ruled the country during the interim period after the military coup of May 1960, was different from its predecessor in certain respects. The former principle of unity of power was replaced by a system of checks and balances to prevent the majority group in the assembly from having an almost free hand. Despite the introduction of an upper house (Senate) and of proportional representation, the juridical control over state activities was enhanced. Furthermore, the new constitution contained a full bill of civil liberties with Article Two declaring the Turkish Republic to be a national, democratic, secular and social state based on human rights. Ironically, a military coup had brought about the most democratic constitution the country has ever had.[22]

On November 7, 1982, a referendum approved a new constitution and, as in the previous example, its drafting was supervised by the

Armed Forces. Confronted with Turkey's rapid slide into social disorder, political deadlock and economic insolvency,[23] the Turkish generals decided once again to oust the civilian administration and took power in a military coup in September 1980. The military held both the more liberal political structures introduced in the 1961 constitution and the politicians themselves responsible for the failure of the Second Republic (1961-1980). The new constitution of the Third Republic curtailed the rights to enjoy basic democratic liberties and enhanced the military's role in the realms of politics and jurisdiction. Moreover, a series of laws enforced under military rule (1980-1983) and the subsequent civilian government of Turgut Ḍzal violated established democratic practice in such matters as political parties, trade unions, collective and individual freedoms, the press, and higher education.[24]

In the constitution of 1982, this enhanced political control was reflected in the irrevocable establishment of the secular principle. The preamble stipulated that "as required by the principle of secularism, there shall be no interference whatsoever of sacred religious feelings in State affairs and politics." Similar to the constitution of 1961, Article Two defines the character of the republic but added the indispensable loyalty to the nationalism of Atatürk and to the fundamental tenets outlined in the Preamble. Article Four declares that the provisions of the first three articles – the republican form of the state, its characteristics, territorial and national integrity, and the declaration of Turkish as state language – are not subject to any amendments. In this way, the new constitution intertwined the integrity of the state, secularism and the political legacy of the Kemalist revolution and made them irrevocable legal principles of the Turkish republic.

Although Article 24 grants freedom of religion, this individual right is only guaranteed as long as enjoying it does not violate the indivisible integrity of the Turkish state (Article 14). At the same time, Article 24 prohibits the political exploitation of religious feelings and all attempts to base "the fundamental, social, economic, political, and legal order of the State on religious tenets." Finally, Article 136 puts the administration of religious affairs under the "Department of Religious Affairs," which exercises its duties "in accordance with the principles of secularism."[25]

This sketch of constitutional developments indicates that the establishment of secularism as a legal principle did not take place with the proclamation of the republic. The constitutional status of the secular principle was gradually enhanced, culminating in its explicit and irrevocable stipulation in the post-coup constitution of 1982.[26] Yet it would be a mistake to confuse this legal establishment of the secular order with a simultaneous secularization of Turkish society and politics in the sense of the classical concept of secularism. The autonomization of the Turkish state has not been accompanied by the privatization of religion and the marginalization of its cultural relevance. The elitist and iconoclastic Kemalist reforms did not penetrate deeply into Turkish society. After the end of the authoritarian single-party rule in 1946, religious brotherhoods (*tarikat*) and communities (*cemaat*) quickly regained their social and political roles. The public reappearance of Islam accompanied the introduction of Turkey's multi-party system and, consequently, the entrance of the periphery into politics.

Without questioning the essentials of the Kemalist reforms, the Democratic Party (DP) government of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes soon participated in this Islamic revival. Founded by three prominent defectors of the Republican People's Party (CHP), the DP became a melting pot for various groups dissatisfied with more than twenty years of authoritarian republican rule. One of the new government's first steps was to abandon Atatürk's prohibition of the Arabic call to prayer. During the ten years of DP rule, innumerable new mosques were built and holy tombs (*türbe*) reopened. The government founded new schools for the education of preachers and prayer leaders, the *imam hatip* schools, as well as university faculties of divinity.[27] Yet for more than three decades, the former leader of the Welfare Party (*Refah*) and Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan was the central political representative of this Islamic revival. In strongly criticizing the Western attitudes of the Turkish elite, Erbakan launched an alternative political discourse in the late 1960s based on the moral values of family and religion. With his National View Movement (NVM), he questions Kemalist policies of Westernization in the name of Islamic authenticity.[28] However, not only Erbakan and his Islamist wing of the center-right, but also Süleyman Demirel and Turgut Ḍzal, who had his political roots in the religious wing of Turkish conservatism, had close ties to religious

circles and used religious symbols in their political campaigns. For the conservative centre-right parties, religious symbolism has always been a means of attracting the votes of Turkey's large Anatolian periphery. While clearly rejecting the idea of an "Islamic state," Sunni Islam has been part and parcel of their identity politics. In addition to the ideological value that conservative propaganda assigned to Islamic symbols in fighting communist and socialist competitors, the center-right parties also used the social networks of religious groups as an effective means of social organization and political mobilization.[29]

This brief account of Turkey's Islamic revival illustrates both its indigenous roots and its relationship with Kemalist modernization. Since the end of the Second World War, religious orders and groups have internally modernized and developed into integral parts of Turkish society with strong links to the political elite. A further point to be made concerns the military, whose politics of social engineering contributed significantly to the rise of the Islamist challenge. On the one hand, the coercive depoliticisation of society after the 1980 coup created a political vacuum that was gradually filled by a religious discourse. The process of economic liberalization, together with the ban on socialist and social democratic parties, gave Islamist movements the opportunity to articulate the grievances of the socially deprived in religious terms.[30] On the other hand, the military applied the ideas of the so-called Turkish-Islamic synthesis, a blending of Sunni Islam and Turkish nationalism, as a tactical means in both its fight against leftist and Kurdish movements and its attempts to maintain the Kemalist ideal of a unitary society. Using the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as an ideological political instrument, the generals tried to incorporate Islam into the state-centered Kemalist concept as a moral source to strengthen the national culture and the legitimacy of the authoritarian state alike.[31] In this way, the military itself played a major part in making the Islamist political discourse socially acceptable, while at the same time it was the driving force behind the constitutional establishment of Turkish secularism.

Secularism and the Foundation of the Turkish Republic

In order to understand the apparent contradictions between the secularization of the legal constitutional order and the gradual

(re)Islamisation of politics and society, it is necessary to analyse the concrete socio-historical background against which Turkish secularism evolved. There are basically two competing interpretations of secularism in the Turkish context. The first understands secularism as the firmly implemented separation of politics and religion. The second disputes this separation and claims that in the Turkish example we should rather speak of the domination and control of religious life by the state.[32] In fact, however, both interpretations stand in a (socio) logical relation. In historical processes of the autonomisation of politics, state domination over religion precedes the twin toleration, i.e., the functional separation between two distinct realms of the state and religion. It is only the latter that has established legal guarantees of religious freedoms.

Historical sociology has identified the formation of the two state monopolies of physical force and taxation as the key structural moment in the evolution of modern statehood in Europe. Accordingly, the modern state is defined as a political community "that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory."[33] Yet this autonomisation of state power also relied on a symbolic order that was able to transcend the narrow dimensions of patriarchal communities. For this reason, the establishment of pre-modern, patrimonial empires was already closely related to the spread of universal religions.[34] The patrimonial precursor of the Turkish republic, the Ottoman Empire, exemplifies this relationship almost paradigmatically. In ideal terms, combining the functions of Sultan and Caliph in one person, the Ottoman rulers represented the unity of the political and religious spheres similar to the "two bodies of the king" that symbolized the unity of politics and theology in medieval Europe.[35]

What is important, however, is that there was a conflict-prone relationship between politics and religion. The stability of patrimonial rule was continuously contested by power struggles between political and religious authorities. Looked at from this perspective, the religious establishment of the Ottoman Empire played a two-fold role. On the one hand, the *ʿulamāʾ* legitimized Ottoman rule, and religious institutions mediated between the distinct spheres of state power and everyday life; on the other, religious structures also built a buffer against central state administration, with the *ʿulamāʾ* playing

an essential role in the justification of popular unrest. Thus, religious leaders could take on ambivalent functions in legitimizing both popular resistance and the political legitimacy of the state elite.[36] In the European context, this ambivalent political function of religion was eventually resolved in the "Peace of Westphalia" (1648). Thus, after a process of "confessionalisation," the early modern state in Europe was finally able to claim a third key monopoly: the monopoly of symbolic reproduction, which was historically expressed by the dominance of the territorial state over the church and religious life.[37]

Against this background, the absolutist rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1908) can be interpreted as an attempt by the Ottoman sultan to acquire this monopoly of symbolic reproduction and therefore control over religious affairs. In 1878, Abdülhamid suspended the Ottoman constitution and dissolved parliament.[38] He cracked down on any kind of opposition to his rule, built up a repressive network of information services, and muzzled the critical journalists and novelists who had just started to spread their ideas to the literate public. In contrast to the development in the *Tanzimat* period (1839-78), which saw a gradual decline in the role of religious dignitaries within the state elite, Abdülhamid surrounded himself with *ʿulamāʾ* and *sheiks*, instrumentalising Islam as an ideology of unity.[39] While the politics of centralisation and modernisation of the state apparatus provided the Sultan with the necessary instrument for his autocratic rule, the pan-Islamic ideology of Hamidian rule can be interpreted as a reaction to the growing legitimacy deficit that the administrative penetration of society had caused. In the face of continued weakening of the Empire in economic and political terms, the state had to resort to the authority provided by the symbolic power of Islam.[40]

In stark contrast to the Kemalist denigration of the Hamidian period, Mustafa Kemal's "enlightened absolutism" resembled in many respects the authoritarian rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II. His centralist policies, as well as the enhancement of the surveillance capacities of the Ottoman state, are precursors of Unionist and later Kemalist authoritarianism. Telling are the parallels between Atatürk's cultural revolution and Abdülhamid's attempt to monopolize the resources of symbolic reproduction and to use them as a major source of political legitimacy. In this light, Hamidian "Islamism" appears

almost to be a blueprint for Kemalist secularism. However, while Abdülhamid drew on indigenous religious symbols, Atatürk and his associates used their cultural capital of Western knowledge. They not only successfully applied the nation-state discourse to the outer world, but they were able to monopolise the domestic production of a national culture. Thus, they provided themselves with the necessary symbolic means of legitimizing their system of domination.

With the proclamation of the Turkish republic in October 1923 began the conscious production and dissemination of a national culture under state control. The iconoclastic character of the Kemalist revolution can best be demonstrated in Atatürk's justification of the so-called hat law of 1925:

> Gentlemen, it was necessary to abolish the fez, which sat on our heads as a sign of ignorance, of fanaticism, of hatred to progress and civilization, and to adopt in its place the hat, the customary headdress of the whole civilized world, thus showing, among other things, that no difference existed in the manner of thought between the Turkish nation and the whole family of civilized mankind.[41]

The enforcement of this hat law went parallel to the closure of religious brotherhoods, convents, sacred tombs and other places of worship. Moreover, the government abolished such religious titles as *sheik* and *dervish*.

In 1926, the Gregorian calendar came into effect, and two years later the Latin alphabet and Western numerals were introduced. In 1934, Ankara enforced a new law requiring Turks to adopt surnames, and the pilgrimage to Makkah was prohibited. Finally, in 1935, Sunday replaced the Muslim Friday as the official day of rest. This bold cultural transformation of Turkish society was accompanied by striking changes in the role of women in public life. As early as 1924, the coeducation of girls and boys was introduced, and ten years later, the regime granted active and passive female suffrage.[42] Even more radical breaks with the traditional image of women were symbolized by drastic actions such as the organization of the first Miss Turkey contest in 1929 or the opening of public beaches for women in the early 1930s.[43] This deliberate dissolution of Ottoman-Muslim culture was completed with the establishment of the Turkish Historical Society (1931) and the Turkish Linguistic Society (1932),

whose task was to invent historical and linguistic traditions of a Turkish national culture.[44]

Atatürk's Cultural Revolution was a bold expression of both the irreversible character of Kemalist modernization and the destruction of political legitimacy based on religion. However, the primordial social function religion had for the Turkish population could not be simply deposed. It was not religion as such, but official religion and its representation by the *'ulamā'* that was replaced by secularism. Therefore, these iconoclast measures were accompanied by the erasure of the institutional and social framework in which the official Islam of the Ottoman Empire exerted social power. In 1924, the republican rulers abolished the office of the *Sheik al-Islam*, the ministry of religious affairs and pious foundations, and religious courts. Together with the caliphate, all institutions of official Islam disappeared, and, with the "Law on the Unification of Education," the state monopolized the field of education. In this context, secularization was a strategy of erasing religion as a means of political resistance to the modernizing elite and the central state.[45]

The suppression of religious symbols and institutions, as well as the strict adherence of the Kemalist state elite to the secularist principle, expresses "confessionalization" in its sociological sense– the imposition of state control over the symbolic reproduction of society. Moreover, the replacement of the independent learned institutions of Islam by the educational and juridical system of the Kemalist state created a new social stratum with a vested interest in the new secular institutions. Besides the military, this new elite of judges, lawyers, teachers, professors, and public administrators constituted the backbone of Kemalist rule.[46] It was this modern social stratum, ideologically associated with and financially dependent on the republican institutions, that together with the ruling elite built the hegemonic bloc of social forces upon which the power of the Kemalist state ultimately rests.[47] Thus the secularist principle played an essential role in the identity construction of these social forces, and it defended the compromise of interests behind the Kemalist hegemonic bloc. Against this background, the most recent expressions of politicized Islam come as no surprise. It seems almost self-evident that the rising counter-elite articulates its interests in the counter-language of Kemalism.

Atatürkism, Secularism and the Military

During the institutionalization of Kemalism in the post-Atatürk period, Turkish secularism solidified into a dogmatic ideology whose function of political and social control is inseparably tied to the personal cult around Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Born in 1881 the son of a customs officer in Salonika, he was an almost classical representative of the late Ottoman modernizers. They evolved during the *Tanzīmāt* and broke away from the Ottoman dynasty in the authoritarian Hamidian times. As is still reflected in the large range of postcards featuring his portrait, Atatürk combined the characters of teacher and officer, intellectual and bohemian, and of enlightened educator and rigid bureaucrat. Whereas his lifestyle resembled that of the Westernized top bureaucrats of the *Tanzīmāt*, his military success gave him the image of a *gāzī*, the religiously-motivated successful warrior of the Ottoman Empire. The military became the vehicle of his social advancement and the positivist spirit of its educational institutions had a crucial impact on moulding his ideas. From a sociological point of view, Atatürk's extraordinary character was certainly not the result of a "godlike mission." Rather, the dazzling personality of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk represented a social collage in which essential cultural, political and social streams of Ottoman-Turkish modernization converged.

In being a war hero, an iconoclast and a revolutionary at the same time, Atatürk combined all the attributes of the exceptional sanctity Max Weber ascribed to charismatic leaders. Weber's ideal type of charismatic authority can therefore help us to explain the successful implementation of the Kemalist reforms. Mustafa Kemal's individual qualities played a decisive role in the republican ascendancy to power, and the introduction of the secularist principle symbolizes how in this Cultural Revolution the destruction of traditional values was accompanied by the "overturn of all notions of sanctity."[48] Similarly, we can look upon the institutionalization of the republican system as the inevitable process of routinization that a charismatic system of authority has to take on in order to overcome its transitory character and establish itself permanently. In this respect, the Republican People's Party (CHP), the army and the bureaucracy represent key instruments of legal authority, while the personal, patriarchal and hierarchic character of the relationship within these

institutions and among the Kemalist leadership, their provincial intermediaries and the people resemble aspects of traditional authority. This heterogeneous patchwork of modern and traditional authority structures has characterized Turkish politics until today.[49]

A crucial turning point in the evolution of Kemalist power structures was the introduction of multi-party politics in 1946. For more than twenty years of autocratic rule, the CHP received a devastating bill at the ballot box. The accelerated social change and the political participation of the periphery undermined the elitist claims to leadership of the CHP, and the political system of Turkey developed into a battleground about public resources that was characterized by clientist structures and patronage.[50] Parallel to the decline of the CHP, the military appropriated its role as the primary institution of Kemalism. In retrospect, the three direct military interventions (1960, 1971, 1980) and the so-called post-modern coup in 1997 can be interpreted as subsequent steps of a non-linear historical process in which the Turkish armed forces took over the functions of political control and social discipline that the CHP had fulfilled during single-party rule (1923-1946). The decline of the CHP was, therefore, reflected in the rise of the military to an autonomous political force whose role in politics was not subject to the imponderables of electoral processes.

This political autonomy reached its peak in the late 1990s and was defined as the ability of the military "to go above and beyond the constitutional authority of democratically elected governments." The Turkish generals frequently issued demands, policy suggestions, and warnings on political matters.[51] After 1970, the army had the unquestioned autonomy to determine defence policies, and the defence budget was neither subject to parliamentary debate nor to a critical discussion in the press.[52] Yet the military's political autonomy was not restricted to matters of national defence. Due to an enlarged security conception that does not distinguish between external and internal threats, the Turkish military acquired the power to draw the limits to politics in a much more general way.[53]

Parallel to the constitutional establishment of legal secularism, Turkey developed a "double-headed" political structure whose executive and juridical functions were characterized by parallel civilian and military systems.[54] In the political realm, the power

position of the army was visible in the National Security Council (NSC), "the institution that really runs the country."[55] Since its inception as a constitutional body in 1961, the NSC was raised from an institution that provided information to the government to one that issued policy recommendations to which the council of ministers had to give priority. Especially during the 1990s, the recommendations of the NSC on economy, foreign policy, education, human rights, and university administration obtained approval without any exception.[56]

Alongside this increase in the army's political autonomy, the personal cult around Atatürk and the propagation of secularism rose to an unprecedented scale. Claiming to be both the guarantor of the Kemalist revolution and the country's leading modernizer, the Turkish officer corps felt obliged to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and the generals were spearheading a crusade to defend the values of Kemalism. The education system of the armed forces socialized a distinct caste committed to absolute loyalty and rigid discipline. The officer corps perceived itself as remaining apart from and above the rest of society.[57] Recruitment patterns showed that the officer career, formally open to all parts of society, was overwhelmingly followed by young men who came from the classical Kemalist milieu of the military, state bureaucracy and the urban middle class.[58]

Like the Janissaries, who were loyal directly to the sultan and the Ottoman state, the Turkish officers served Atatürk and the Kemalist republic. In a genealogical spirit, tracing a direct line from Atatürk, the military conceived itself as guardian and trustee of the Turkish state. Being committed to a radical notion of secularism, the officer corps believed in a form of ideological Atatürkism that, in its claim to cover all fields of human activity, was of a fundamentalist character.[59]

The personal cult around Atatürk, the defence of the secular order, and the political autonomy of the military were obviously closely tied together. In a slightly exaggerated fashion one could say that the will of Atatürk represented the highest and undisputed obligation to the public order. It was the officer corps that had the ultimate right to interpret this will, and the military, therefore, frequently intervened in political and juridical affairs. The particular character of Turkey's civilian-military relationship was that the armed forces

were not accountable to civilian rule, but that the civilian state institutions were accountable to the generals. In this reading, the Turkish state almost resembled a "religious foundation" (*vakif*) that Atatürk placed in the hands of the Turkish army. The military represented both at the same time, sultan and "Caliph," ultimate worldly authority and guardian of Kemalist norms and values. In short, the Turkish officers elevated themselves to the high priests of secularism, and the founder of the nation was raised to a God-like dimension.

The Secularist-Islamist Divide and the "Kemalist Panopticon"

In the light of this analysis of Turkish secularism, Cengiz Candar's conclusion that Kemalism appears to be "a kind of state religion in its own right" seems to make sense.[60] This almost religious character of the Kemalist doctrine was further enhanced by the omnipresence of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. His stern and authoritative eyes have penetrated public and private spaces alike. It is scarcely necessary to show that the veneration of the founder of the Turkish Republic was by no means merely imposed. Portraits, photographs, and sculptures of Atatürk have been an integral part of Kemalist life worlds. In public places or private homes, Atatürk's gaze and various social dimensions of his personality have always been present.

From a sociological point of view, however, this omnipotent image of Atatürk serves different functions. On the one hand, his image seems to transcend all the social, regional, ethnic, religious, and functional fragmentation by which Turkish society is factually characterized. The personal cult around Atatürk symbolizes the corporative claims of Kemalist ideology, and it has been instrumental as a means of political integration. On the other hand, Atatürk and his heritage have been the central sources of legitimacy on which the Kemalist power structures rest. It is certainly not by accident that his multi-dimensional personality reflects the self-perception of the various social forces of Turkey's hegemonic Kemalist bloc. As an icon of Kemalism, the founder of the Turkish state not only symbolizes the compromise of interests among those forces, but also serves as a justification of their claim to power. Ironically, in the historical process the former revolutionary has been turned into a bulwark against political and social changes.

In relation to this primary function of Turkish secularism as a disciplinary mechanism, in the 1990s, a certain panoptic character in Turkey's political structures could be observed. Following J. Bentham, Michel Foucault described the panopticon as a "marvellous machine which … produces homogeneous effects of power." It normally enables power holders to avoid the direct use of physical force because "real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation." In abstracting from the architectonic model of a prison with its central surveillance tower from which a single person controls all inmates, Foucault defines the panopticon as a "political technology" that induces a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power." In general, this technology defines "power relations in terms of the everyday life of men." Based on its preventive character, its continuous functioning, and its automatic mechanism, the panopticon perfects the execution of social power. Political authority is exercised spontaneously and without noise creating a society that is broadly infiltrated by open and hidden disciplinary mechanisms.[61]

In the "Kemalist panopticon," secularism worked as a disciplinary mechanism of exclusion, and the omnipresence of Atatürk represented the unconscious function of permanent surveillance. Atatürk's gaze in private and public spaces was both a fictitious relation of surveillance and a self-imposed means of social control. This silent mechanism of self-discipline in Turkish society was mirrored by the relatively high level of self-censorship and political self-restraint amongst Turks. This became apparent, for instance, in the labeling of Erbakan's 1997 resignation as a "post-modern coup."

The anticipation of military actions against the Erbakan government was enough to avoid them. Invoking a threat against the secular constitution of the republic, the military was able to rally a substantial part of Turkish "civil society" behind its undemocratic campaign.[63] Another case in point was the fact that academics and journalists were very reluctant to touch on sensitive issues such as freedom of religion, the cult around Atatürk, the role of the military, the Armenian massacres, or the Kurdish question.[63] These instances underline how deeply the disciplinary mechanisms of Turkish secularism had penetrated individuals and institutions alike. Generally speaking, the various forms of Turkey's center-periphery relations have

expressed the asymmetric power structures that the Turkish republic inherited from Ottoman times. The Kemalist project carried on the ideals of a top-down modernization, as well as the total identification of state apparatus and ruling state elite. Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic, these asymmetric state-society relations have increasingly been expressed in the struggle between secularist and religious forces. Not surprisingly, the introduction of electoral democracy gave the previously silent masses of the periphery a voice that took on a religious tone. In this situation, the Turkish armed forces detached themselves from society, gradually building up their parallel political, juridical, educational, and economic structures. Partly backed by civilian forces of the republican elite, the military took over the functions of political and social control that the Republican People's Party had previously exercised. In routinizing Atatürk's charismatic authority in ideological (Atatürkism), legal (constitutional secularism), and institutional (National Security Council) terms, the army countered the incorporation of the periphery into the political system, subordinated party politics under its supreme guardianship, and protected the interests of the Kemalist hegemonic bloc.

In justifying the political autonomy of the Turkish military, secularism played a crucial role. It is in this sense that we can understand the development of Turkish secularism as a key to Turkish politics. In various instances, the secular principle served as the decisive rallying point between the military and Turkey's modernized elite, although their particular interests increasingly diverged. Turkey's genuinely modern forces were eventually willing to compromise democracy, and core features of the authoritarian political structures of the early republic have been perpetuated into our days. Moreover, a subtle system of surveillance and punishment developed, a Kemalist panopticon, in which direct repression could be partly substituted by the self-disciplining effects of a panoptic mechanism.

Conclusions

In the 1990s, Turkish secularism represented a binary code, a means of stigmatization that divided Turkish politics into friends and foes. Viewed from the perspective of the state elite, those who did not at

least formally commit themselves to the principle of secularism stood outside of the accepted political discourse. Those who were "outed" as Islamists threatened the integrity of the Turkish state and faced the firm hand of the penal court. The instrument of political legitimacy that in the consolidation period of the republican system might have been necessary developed into a dualistic mechanism of political exclusion. It divided Turkish society in two parts, thereby forging heterogeneous alliances between authoritarian and democratic forces on both sides. In the Turkish and also the European political debates, secularism was associated with attributes such as modern, progressive, Western or civilized, whereas the excluded other was branded as backward, fundamentalist, or hostile to democratic values. It was in this way that the political discourse indeed echoed the symbolic representation of Turkey's center-periphery relations and the Kemalist notion of secularism turned into a key to understanding Turkish politics.

In the coming-to-power of the Turkish counter-elite, however, the erosion of the Kemalist panopticon became apparent. In adopting a "pro-Western" stand themselves, Turkey's religious political mainstream decisively weakened the power of the Kemalist state elite who previously claimed to be the vanguard of Turkish modernization. In presenting itself as a "post-Islamist" political party, the AKP was not only able to take over power, but also to spearhead Turkish modernization in advocating democracy, market economy, human rights and EU integration.[64] In this way, the transformation of Turkey's Islamist forces took part in overcoming the political impasse in which Kemalist modernization had let the country in the 1990s. Ironically, they had reversed the Turkish experience. While the Westernizing state elite always regarded the Islamic periphery with great suspicion, these forces were now pushing for more democracy and deeper European integration.[65]

To be sure, the re-structuration of Turkish politics is still an open-ended process that takes place in the broader context of a number of heterogeneous internal and external forces such as Kurdish nationalism, human rights activism, EU accession, and economic globalization.[66] It is in this complex context that the Islamization of the political discourse puts the Kemalist state religion on the defense. Increasingly, it has become apparent that the secularist doctrine in

its Kemalist version, i.e., as the rigid subordination of religious life to state control has posed an obstacle to the consolidation of Turkish democracy. Turkish secularism reminds us of the absolutist domination over religion of Europe's early modern past, rather than to the pluralistic religious freedoms which the secular constitution of the contemporary European state provides for its citizen. With the transformation of a large part of Turkey's Islamist forces, a reconciliation of democratically-minded secularists with parts of the religious camp seems to be possible. If Turkish politics shifts its major dividing line from the binary code of secularism to the distinction between authoritarian and democratically-minded forces, the panoptic structures of Kemalism will eventually lose their power. Then, the twin tolerations of religion and state could replace the Kemalist subordination of religion to state control. From this perspective, the "re-Islamization" of Turkish politics and society would not be a deviation, but rather a continuation of Turkey's path toward a modern Muslim and European society.

Notes

1. Serif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Daedalus*, 102, no. 1, (1973): 168-190.

2. Nilüfer Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites," *Middle Eastern Journal*, 51, no. 1 (1997): 52 and 46-58.

3. Unless otherwise specified, I will use the terms "Islamism" or "Islamists" as a residual category throughout this article. In this application of the terms they have no evaluative or analytical quality, but only signify the very general idea of relating religious norms and values to policies of establishing social order in predominantly Muslim societies. Therefore, the term lumps together a broad range of very different political actors from democratically-minded parties to organizations with militant ideologies.

4. Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites," 57.

5. Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations," 178.

6. Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey," 54.

7. In this article, the term "Kemalism" or "Kemalists" is used as an expression of this crucial linkage between political ideology, state institutions, and state

elite. Thus its usage is limited to "official Kemalism." For an account of different streams of Kemalist thinking, both official as well as those, in opposition to the state elite, see Necmi Erdogan, "Kemalist Non-Governmental Organizations: Troubled Elites in Defence of a Sacred Heritage," in *Civil Society in the Grip of Nationalism: Studies on Political Culture in Contemporary Islam,* eds. Yerasimos, Stefanos, Günter Seufert and Karin Vorhoff (Istanbul: Orient-Institut and Institut François d'ātudes Anatoliennes, distributed by Ergon, Wurzburg, 2000), 251-282.

8. Cengiz Candar, "Atatürk's Ambiguous Legacy," *Wilson Quarterly*, 24, no. 4 (Autumn 2000): 95.

9. Ergun Ḍzbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics. Challenges to Democratic Consolidation* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 151.

10. Niklas Luhmann, *Die Religion der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2000), 278-9.

11. Ulrich Willems, "Säkularisierung des Poltitischen oder politik wissenschaftlicher Säkularismus?," in *Säkularisierung und Resakralisierung in westlichen Gesellschaften,* eds. Mathias Hildebrandt *et al.* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2001), 215.

12. See, for example, the otherwise very informative and readable works of Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993), Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), and Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

13. Peter L. Berger, "Reflections on the Sociology of Religion Today," *Sociology of Religion,* 63, no. 4 (2001): 443-54; Luckmann, Thomas "Transformations of Religion and Morality in Modern Europe," *Social Compass*, 50, no. 3 (2003): 275-285.

14. Nicholas J. Demrath III,. *Crossing the Gods: World Religions and Worldly Politic,* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 185.

15. Alfred Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations'," *Journal of Democracy*, 11, no. 4 (2000): 37.

16. Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 246-8.

17. *Dustur: A Survey of the Constitutions of the Arab and Muslim States* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964), 17.

18. Jan E. Zürcher, *The Vocabulary of Muslim Nationalism*, [Online] available from http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/tcimo/tulp (2000), accessed November 11, 2006.

19. Söner Cagaptay, *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism: Who is a Turk?* (London: Routledge, 2006).

20. *Dustur*, 18.

21. The six Kemalist principles are: republicanism, reformism, nationalism, statism, populism, and secularism.

22. See *Constitution of the Turkish Republic*, translated for the Committee of National Unity by Sadik Balkan, Ahmet E. Uysal and Kemal H. Karpat (Ankara, 1961).

23. Mehmet Ali Birand, *The General's Coup in Turkey: An Inside Story of 12 September 1980* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1987), vii.

24. Feroz Ahmad, "The Transition to Democracy in Turkey," *Third World Quarterly*, 7, no. 2 (1986): 213 and 211-226.

25. See: Turkish Constitution [Online] available from http://www.turkey.org/politics/p_consti.htm, accessed October 28, 2006.

26. This constitution is still effective, however, it is currently under crucial transformations because of the frequent amendments due to the EU reform process.

27. Uriel Heyd, *Revival of Islam in Modern Turkey* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1968) and H.A. Reed, "The Revival of Islam in Secular Turkey," *Middle East Journal*, 8, no. 3 (267-82).

28. Ihsan Dagi, "Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization," *Turkish Studies,* 6, no. 1 (2005): 21-37.

29. See Feride Acar, "Islam in Turkey," in *Turkey and Europe* eds. Canan Balkir and Allan M. Williams (London and New York: Pinter Publishers, 1993), 219-38, and Günter Seufert, *Neue pro-islamische Parteien in der Türkei,* (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2002), 14.

30. For a precise analysis of this process, see Günter Seufert, *Politischer Islam in der Türkei. Islamismus als symbolische Repräsentation einer sich modernisierenden muslimischen Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997).

31. Seufert, *Politischer Islam in der Türkei*, 182-202, and Jan E. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 303.

32. Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey. A Hermeneutic Reconsideration*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).

33. Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1991), 78.

34. Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence: Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 71.

35. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

36. Halil Inalcik, "Turkey," in *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* eds., Robert E. Ward and Dankwart Rustow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 42-63, and Serif Mardin, "Ideology and Religion in the Turkish Revolution," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no. 2 (1971): 197-211.

37. Heinz Schilling, *Religion, Political Culture, and the Emergence of Early Modern Society: Essays in German and Dutch History* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 216 and 230; Philip S. Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ca. 1300 to 1700," *American Sociological Review,* 65, no. 1 (February 2000): 138-67.

38. In this way he put an end to the attempt of the so-called Young Ottomans around Namik Kemal to reform the empire's political institutions by constitutional and participatory elements from an Islamic perspective.

39. S. Duguid, "The Politics of Unity: Hamidean Policy in Eastern Anatolia," *Middle East Studies*, 9, no. 2 (1973): 139-155.

40. Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998).

41. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *A Speech Delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 1927* (*Nutuk*) (Istanbul: Ministry of Education Printing Plant, 1963), 738.

42. Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern. Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 14.

43. Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 87-8.

44. D. M. Alici, "The Role of Culture, History and Language in Turkish National Identity Building: An Overemphasis on Central Asian Roots," *Central Asian Survey*, 15, no. 2 (June 1996): 217-231.

45. Mardin, Ideology and Religion, 208-9, and Serif Mardin, "Religion and Politics in Modern Turkey," in *Islam in the Political Process,* ed. James P. Piscatori (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 142-3, 138-159.

46. Mardin, "Religion and Politics in Modern Turkey,"148-9.

47. On the theory of hegemonic blocs, see Robert W. Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

48. Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1116.

49. It goes without saying that political modernization always displays patchworks of modern legal and traditional authority structures. In this sense, Turkey resembles the rule rather than the exception. Interesting is not the mere fact of a patchwork, but the concrete and historically specific pattern of modern and traditional elements that characterizes the patchwork of a particular country.

50. See Ergun Ḍzbudun, "Turkey: The Politics of Political Clientelism," in *Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development,* eds. Samuel N. Eisenstadt and René Lemarchand (London and Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981), 249-268, and Sabri Sayari, "Political Patronage in Turkey," in *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies, eds.* Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (London: Duckworth, 1977), 103-114.

51. Ümit Cizre-Sakallioglu, "The Anatomy of the Turkish Military's Autonomy," *Comparative Politics*, 9, no. 4 (1997): 153, 151-165.

52. Ibid., 159-60.

53. Cengiz Candar, "Redefining Turkey's Political Center," *Journal of Democracy*, 10, no. 4 (1999): 131, 129-141.

54. Cizre-Skallioglu, The Anatomy, 157. After a short period of existence between 1973 and 1976, the so-called state security courts were re-introduced in 1983. They are composed of two civilian judges, one military judge, and two prosecutors. In June 1999, Turkish parliament passed a law to demilitarize the state security courts. Apart from the civil courts, Turkey also has military courts that are responsible for military-related law cases. See Bahri Ḍztürk, "Die rechtsstaatlichen Strukturen der Türkei," *Politische Studien*, 50 (1999): 78-104.

55. Candar, "Redefining Turkey's Political Center," 131.

56. See TÜSIAD, *Perspectives on Democratization in Turkey*, http://www.tusiad.org.1997, Chapter One: Perspectives on Democratisation in Turkey, Section V: The Issue of Civilianisation, 2) National Security Council (Article 118 of the Constitution).

57. Ali L. Karaosmanoglu, "Officers: Westernization and Democracy," in *Turkey and the West. Changing Political and Cultural Identities,* eds. Metin Heper, Ayshe Öncü and Heinz Kramer (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 27, 19-33.

58. James Brown, "The Military and Society: the Turkish Case," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 25, no.3 (1989), 400, 387-404.

59. Mehmet Ali Birand, *Shirts of Steel. An Anatomy of the Turkish Armed Forces* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), 23-56.

60. Candar, "Atatürk's Ambiguous Legacy," 95.

61. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1977), 200-207.

62. It is somehow strange that Ergun Ḍzbudun views this joint campaign as a manifestation of the growing power of civil society. Rather, it should be seen as just another instance of the persistence of the Kemalist hegemonic bloc and its negative impact on democratic practices in Turkey. Ḍzbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics*, 138.

63. See Metin Heper *et al.*, *Turkey and the West*, 83.

64. Dagi, "Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey," 33.

65. Caglar Keyder, "Moving in from the Margins? Turkey in Europe," *Diogenes,* no. 210 (2006): 78.

66. It is not the place here to analyze this process more closely. For a recent study, see Ziya Ḍnis, "The Political Economy of Islam and Democracy in Turkey: From the Welfare Party to the AKP," in *Democracy and Development. New Political Strategies for the Middle East,* ed. Dietrich Jung (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 103-128.